5 April 2017

Original: English

Disarmament Commission
2017 substantive session
New York, 3-21 April 2017
Agenda item 4

Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons

Working paper submitted by the States members of the League of Arab States

1. Disarmament and international security issues can be addressed sustainably only through multilaterally agreed solutions in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. All Member States must therefore abide by their individual and shared commitments to foster multilateral cooperation.

2. Instead of bringing about regional and international peace and security, the possession, acquisition and development of nuclear weapons will increase instability. The complete and definitive eradication of nuclear weapons is the only way to eliminate the threat or use of those weapons.

3. The Conference on Disarmament, the Disarmament Commission and the First Committee of the General Assembly play a key role in multilateral efforts to promote disarmament, in accordance with the mandate established by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1978, which affirmed that nuclear disarmament measures have the highest priority.

4. There is a deep international concern over the continued stagnation of the United Nations disarmament mechanisms, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, which is the sole international forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament, and we call for practical steps to be taken to revitalize those mechanisms. To achieve that objective, Member States are urged to demonstrate flexibility and the necessary political will.

5. We reaffirm that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and that action should be taken to strengthen compliance with the Treaty and ensure its universality.

6. In addition, we recall the advisory opinion issued by the International Court of Justice on 8 July 1996 concerning the legality of the threat of use of nuclear weapons, in which the Court found that there exists an obligation to pursue in good

Please recycle

faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

7. The efforts made towards the voluntary reduction in the number of nuclear warheads are welcomed, but such action cannot be a substitute for nuclear disarmament efforts aimed at the complete eradication of those weapons. The relevant legal obligations and resolutions must therefore be upheld.

8. We stress the importance of General Assembly resolution 68/32 and subsequent resolutions entitled "Follow-up to the 2013 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on nuclear disarmament".

9. Furthermore, we highlight the declaration by the General Assembly of 26 September as the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and its decision to convene, no later than 2018, a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament to review the progress made in that regard.

10. The Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, should be urged to devise, in accordance with the request of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, a comprehensive and balanced programme of work that will include the commencement of negotiations concerning:

- A comprehensive treaty that would prohibit the possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transport and use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, and provide for their destruction
- Nuclear disarmament, with a view to gradually eliminating nuclear weapons within a specified time frame, resulting in their complete, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination
- A ban on the use and production of fissile materials for military purposes that also addresses the existing stockpiles of those materials by nuclear-weapon-possessing States, with a view to ensuring that non-proliferation issues do not overshadow efforts to promote disarmament
- International arrangements to provide non-nuclear-weapon States with unconditional and legally enforceable security guarantees that they will not be subject to any use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against them by the nuclear States, until such time as nuclear weapons have been completely eliminated

11. Universalizing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and facilitating its entry into force is important. States that have yet to ratify that Treaty should be encouraged to do so, in particular nuclear-weapon States, which bear fundamental responsibility in that regard.

12. The Arab Group underlines the vitality of the international process with respect to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which was crowned with the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 71/46, entitled "Humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons", and 71/47, entitled "Humanitarian pledge for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons".

13. The Arab Group welcomes and supports the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, to be held from 27 to 31 March and from 17 June to 7 July 2017 in New York.

14. In addition, the Arab Group affirms the inalienable right of States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to benefit from the peaceful

uses of nuclear energy, as provided for in the Treaty. It rejects attempts to restrict or limit that right while privileges are granted to certain States that are not parties to the Treaty.

15. We emphasize that the national decisions taken by States to benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy should be respected. No steps should be taken that could hamper or negatively affect international cooperation with those States relating to peaceful technologies, so long as they remain committed to the safeguards agreements concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It should be affirmed that the Agency is the authority with sole responsibility for verifying State compliance with commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

16. The Arab Group reiterates its support for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world, in particular in the Middle East. The establishment of those zones would strengthen efforts towards nuclear disarmament, enhance the security of the concerned States and bring us closer to our overarching goal, namely the realization and preservation of international peace and security.

17. The Arab Group reaffirms that the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is a collective responsibility. The resolution on the Middle East that was adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, concerning the establishment of a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, represents the principle and central pillar of the Treaty indefinite extension package. That resolution remains valid until its objectives are fulfilled.

18. In this context, and during the most recent Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held at the United Nations in 2015, we exerted sincere efforts to reach a way forward on the Middle East by presenting new practical ideas, contained in the Arab working paper, that had been endorsed by the Non-Aligned Movement. However, such a positive approach regrettably did not achieve its objective owing to the consensus blocking committed by three States, two of which were depositary States of the Treaty, which lead to the complete obstruction of international will and the draft final document.

19. The failure of the 2015 Review Conference and the lack of agreement on any decision regarding the Middle East pose a strong challenge to all of us and require us to redouble our collective efforts in order to implement the 1995 Middle East resolution and to achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons. We seek constructive participation in and the success of the first Preparatory Committee of the 2020 Review Conference, to be held from 2 to 12 May 2017 in Vienna.

20. The Arab Group calls upon IAEA to halt the technical programmes provided to Israel. Cooperation with Israel in all nuclear fields should be suspended until it accedes to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons as a non-nuclear-weapon State and places all its nuclear facilities under the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system. Those steps are a necessary precondition in order to promote the universality, credibility and effectiveness of the Treaty.